

#E1-603  
RS

February 9, 2004

Rini Ghosh  
Surface Transportation Board  
Case Control Unit  
1925 K Street, NW  
Washington, DC 20423-0001



STB Finance Docket No. 34284

Dear Rini Ghosh,

We are writing in support of the proposed Vulcan Quarry for Medina County. As lifetime residents and involved members of the county, we believe the quarry will have many positive benefits for the citizens of the county.

Contrary to some fears about the rail line causing traffic hazards, the county roads, FM 2676 and CR 353, in the proposed area are not heavily traveled. In fact, the seven miles of rail line will only impact the few residents who live on farms and ranches and those in two small subdivisions currently being development. These roads are not used as thoroughfares for commuters as you would find in roads crossed by rail lines in San Antonio, Hondo, LaCoste, Lytle, Devine and Natalia. In the small City of Hondo, there are seven grade-level railroad crossing in the heavily traveled downtown area and to our knowledge have not been a significant traffic hazard.

The people of our County are very interested in preserving cultural resources. The concerns about the erosion of any such resources in the proposed area are not shared by the Schweers Historical Foundation, responsible for the restoration of the only homestead of this designation.

We understand the concerns about noise and health issues, but the train will not run near any schools, churches, parks or hospitals and will be at a distance from the few residential homes in the area. In addition, the emissions and safety from the four trains per day will be much less than the amount created from hauling limestone by many more trucks each day.

Since we are the landowners where the Quarry will be located, we can verify the completion of a thorough biological assessment in coordination with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. The assessment concluded there were no threatened or endangered species at risk by the creation and existence of the Quarry or rail line.

For more than 70 years, we have seen businesses come and go in the County. Since we neighbor one of the largest cities in the U.S., it has been difficult to sustain businesses in our county long-term. Big-sized competitors in San Antonio have closed many small privately owned companies that provided for local residents. The Vulcan Quarry is new hope for the County that will provide local employment for many people for many years.

County schools, primarily Hondo I.S.D., will benefit from the infusion of taxes paid by the Quarry at a time when all schools desperately need help funding educational needs. Already, we are experiencing a teacher shortage in the State, and schools in our county have an even tougher time hiring teachers because we cannot offer the same competitive salary as our neighboring big city.

We have been very involved citizens through the years and we truly believe this project will help revitalize and bring greater economic prosperity to our county. We would never harm the community we love, where we have raised our children, and that has been a part of our families for generations. We still have children, grandchildren, brothers, sisters, parents, aunts, uncles and cousins living in this county.

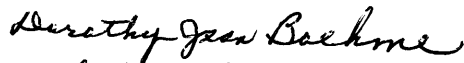
It is for the following reasons, that we support this project:

- Vulcan puts a great deal of emphasis on being a good community citizen.
- The quarry will bring more jobs to the county; so fewer residents would have to make long commutes to San Antonio and other distant locations.
- More jobs create economic prosperity and help improve our quality of life.
- Landowners and residents benefit when a corporation like Vulcan comes in and converts agricultural exempt land to commercial land.
- Vulcan does not plan to ask for a tax abatement and will eventually pay \$600,000 annually in taxes compared to the \$1,200 currently collected for the same land.
- The bulk of the tax dollars (\$450,000) will go to the Hondo Independent School District, reducing the need for costly school bonds.
- The remaining \$150,000 will go to the county to help minimize tax increases for citizens.
- Vulcan will pump approximately \$7 million into the local economy to pay for salaries, supplies, services and other operating expenses.
- The availability of commercial transportation makes the agricultural land in the county more marketable, thus increasing its value.
- Surrounding towns like Hondo, LaCoste, Devine, Natalia, Lytle and San Antonio have grade-level railroads running through them with no negative impact. With the exception of San Antonio, the other towns only have grade-level crossings.

We are deeply concerned about Dr. Robert Fitzgerald, who has recently moved to the area and has formed the Medina County Environmental Action Association (MCEAA). He has riled the citizens of our small community, especially those in Quihi, while caring little about them and the future of their survival. In fact, this new business opportunity will enhance quality of life for most Medina County residents through improved schools, better roads and more jobs, as well as increase land values.

Thank you for the opportunity to voice our support.

Sincerely,



Clovis and Dorothy Jean Boehme  
Medina County